

# POCAHONTAS TANNING CO.

H. M. WIDNEY, SUPERINTENDENT

## TANNERS

RAILROAD STATION, TELEGRAPH AND  
AMERICAN EXPRESS OFFICES, DURBIN,  
POCAHONTAS COUNTY, W. VA.  
C. & O. AND W. MD. RAILWAYS

POSTOFFICE: FRANK, (POCAHONTAS COUNTY) W. VA. Sept. 8th, 1937.

Miss Margaret C. Williamson, Ass't. State Editor,  
W. P. A.,  
Charleston, West Va.

Madam:-

We acknowledge receipt of your letter of 31st, ult., and would answer your questions as follows:-

✓ The Durbin Tannery of the Pocahontas Tanning Co., is probably the second largest tannery in the U. S. A., both in floor space and production, devoted entirely to the production of sole leather. Recent enlargements of competitive plants does not give us definite information on this subject at this time.

✓ Manufactured products are SOLE LEATHER for the purpose of building new shoes. By-products are Washed Cattle Hair used in floor coverings, insulation felts and many styles of felt padding. Glue stock used for the manufacture of glues and also greases.

Raw Hides are obtained from the Packing Centers of the USA, South America, Mexico, Australia and Europe. Tanning Materials are procured in USA, South America, Africa, Philippine Islands, Turkey and India, and local Hemlock and Oak barks from the West Virginia Forests.

The Pocahontas Tanning Co., is a West Virginia Corporation with Main Office at Main and 24th Sts., Wheeling, West Va.

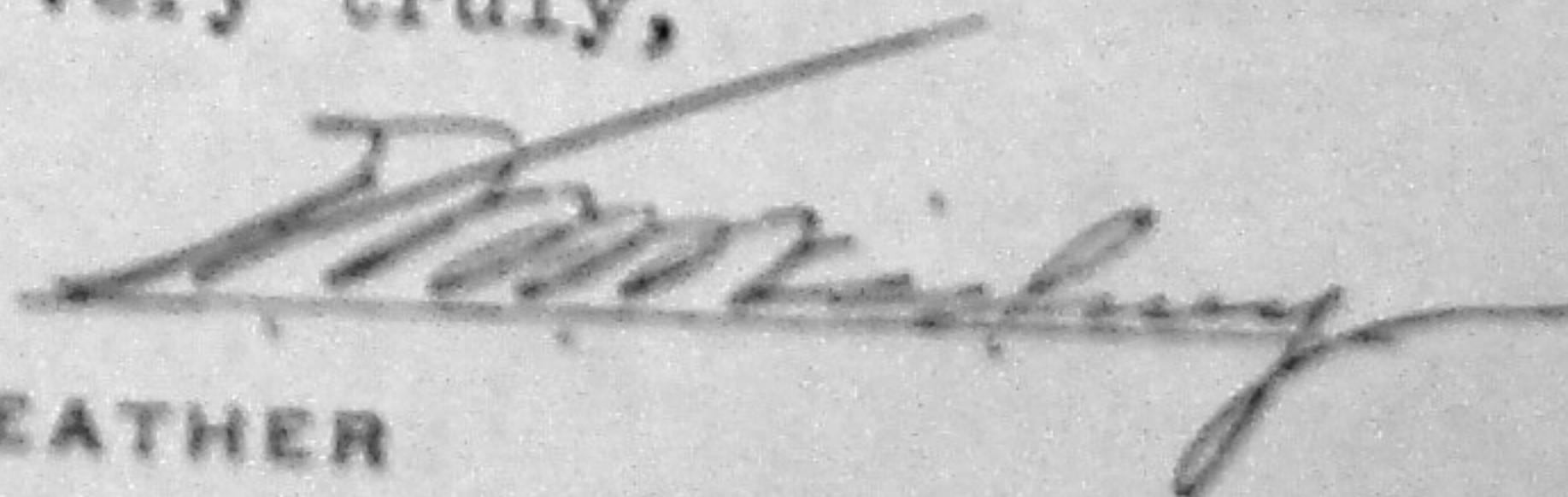
✓ Due to the tanning processes requiring tanning vats and surroundings wet, visitors are not sought after, however, we do allow partial visitation of plant and exhibit main products and By-products.

✓ The plant was located at Frank, West Va., account of the close-up supply of large quantities of hemlock and oak bark, which supplies are now largely exhausted.

Frank, West Va., is an unincorporated village located in Greenbank, District. It is partly Company owned houses with many privately owned residences. It is an ideal location, houses are well maintained and the people have much civic pride. Located on US Route 250.

Trusting this is the information you seek, we are,

Yours very truly,



NOTHING TAKES THE PLACE OF LEATHER



Pocahontas County  
S. G. Smith  
Hillsboro, W. Va.

Ch. 7 - Commerce, Industry

In 1908 John Pace and John Luzier of Tucker County came to Pocahontas County and bought the timber off of some 400 acres.

This was principally red oak and some white oak.

One tract of this timber of approximately 200 acres was purchased from John Beverage on the right prong of Dry Creek a tributary of Swago Creek and not far from Buckeye, Post office and C&O Railroad, close the divide between Dry Creek and Stony Creek.

The other tract of approximately 200 acres was purchased from Daniel Adkison also of Buckeye and located on the left prong of Dry Creek but on the side of the mountain leading to Williams River.

They first set their mill on the Beverage farm the trees were cut and skidded to the mill which was a single band, there the logs were cut in lengths from 18 inches to 30 inches set on end and quarter sawed in to inch lumber to be used for chair backs which were shipped mostly to Philadelphia, Pa. and Baltimore, Md. to furniture factories.

They finished this set up in 1910 and moved to the Adkison farm and set their mill in Camp Secret Hollow, on the Adkison farm.

This land was very rough the skidding was very hard as they would have to skid the logs a short distance, cut loose from them and roll them over high cliffs of rocks and again hook the horses to the trail of logs and finally get them to the mill and cut them into chair backs mostly 22 inches long and 1 inch thick so when they were surfaced they were 3/4 inch thick, this oak took a high finish and sold from \$80.00 to \$140.00 per thousand at the furniture factories.

This chair back timber was taken by sled or wagon to be loaded on cars at Buckeye which is a stop on the C&O Railroad of the Greenbrier Division.

Pace and Luzier employed 8 to 10 men in the woods and on the mill, a greater part of this help they brought from their home county of Tucker, but a part of the



Pocahontas County

pay roll was spent locally in Pocahontas County and mostly at Buckeye, where there was a post-office and 2 or 3 stores but this operation did not add to the growth of Swago Community. However, the payroll helped greatly in some way or other as the taxes they paid helped run our schools and our county affairs.

They paid \$1.25 per thousand for cutting the timber and from \$1.50 to \$2.25 for other labor they finished up cutting the chair backs in 1912 but cut other lumber from logs not suitable for furniture for about a year and finished up and moved out in 1913 to some other section of the state, where red oak timber was plentiful and close to a railroad this passed another timber operation of Pocahontas County.

Information: Austin Duncan, Buckeye, W. Va. Harper Adkison, Marlinton, W. Va.  
Bill Crigger, Huntersville, W. Va.



Manita S. Dilley

CHAPTER 4 - SECTION 4a - 1

CHAPTER 5 - SECTION 3a - 1

POCAHONTAS COUNTY

LOG DRIVES ON THE GREENBRIER 1876 - 1899

Timber, especially the white pine, was cut at the head of the river, all along the river and all navigable creeks. During the winter months the logs were skidded to the river and piled up in big landings. They were fixed in a way that they would have to be kicked loose before they would tumble into the river. Before spring an ark was built on the water. This would accommodate from 70 to 100 men, or whatever number was needed to make the drives. An ark was also built for the horses, and some experienced teamsters were taken along on the drive.

When spring opened, men were hired to make the drive down the river. The men hired for breaking up the jams had to have experience.

It sometimes took six or eight weeks to make the drive down the river to Ronceverte where the timber was sold and made into lumber. One morning the men decided to play a joke on a certain young teamster who always made a dash for the table when the bell was rung, and usually succeeded in being the first one there. A board was laid between the two arks to be used as a walk-way between them. Foam often covered it so that unless one observed closely he could not tell if it was there or not. Before breakfast one morning the men decided to remove this board and give this teamster a bath. The breakfast bell rang and he made a dash for the table, did not notice the board was gone therefore plunged into the river. He swam to the ark and crawled on deck cussing mad. The other men kept from laughing as long as they could, but finally they burst out laughing and after a while the teamster joined in with them and every one had a good laugh.

From - Pocahontas Times - March 11, 1926.

Someone usually kept a record of what happened each day. Some days we would go as far as 18 or 20 miles while on other days we could look back at dark and see where we had started from in the morning. Driving the logs was very dangerous.